

The background is a gradient from red at the top to blue at the bottom. It features several concentric circles and a radial scale on the left side. The scale has markings from 40 to 260 in increments of 10. There are also some dashed lines and arrows pointing in different directions.

HOWARD COUNTY, MARYLAND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & PROSPERITY TASK FORCE FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

DECEMBER 10, 2018

TASK FORCE PURPOSE

- Purpose - Identify and study policies, programs, and potential legislation to facilitate economic growth and increase economic opportunities for individuals, businesses, and organizations in Howard County and to make recommendations to the Howard County Council and Howard County Executive.
- Actions –
 - Review and analyze policies, programs, laws, and incentives related to expanding and supporting employment and economic growth in Howard County;
 - Recommend changes to those policies, programs, laws, and incentives; and
 - Recommend any new policies, programs, and incentives to further foster employment and economic growth in Howard County.

EMERGING THEMES AND TRENDS

All recommendations have the following groups or populations in mind:

1. In efforts to define the targeted audience of individuals, the EOPTF elected to focus its work on specific audiences. The first were individuals for whom meeting day to day expenses is a challenge, referred to as **ALICE**, a United Way acronym that stands for **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained, **E**mployed.
2. Additional individuals are those who are skilled and possibly educated beyond high school, yet they are not consistently employed. Even when employed, often with multiple jobs, the take home income is not commensurate with their skills and education. While not included in the ALICE framework, there are also employment obstacles for persons with disabilities, older adults wishing to enter the workforce, and ex-offenders facing face multiple barriers to employment.

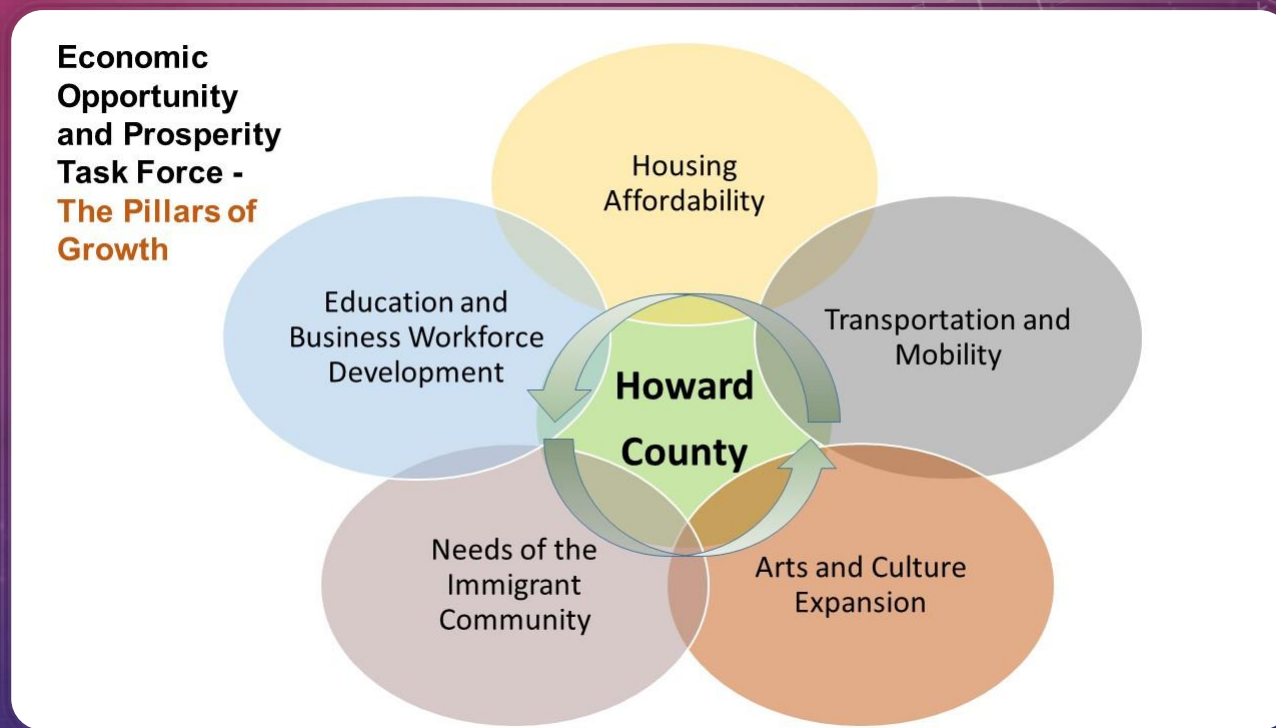
EMERGING THEMES AND TRENDS CONT'D

3. Based on opportunities for employment and the advantages that Howard County possesses, a few priority sectors can be identified. While the county government should continue to have a broad, horizontal approach to entrepreneurship, business growth, and workforce development, relevant agencies and entities may find particular opportunities in these sectors. They are (in no particular order):

- professional and business services;
- information technology/cybersecurity;
- transportation and logistics;
- manufacturing, especially advanced;
- health care, including service delivery and also the preceding sectors as they relate to the health sector (i.e. health IT/software development, medical devices, biotechnology, and other research & development).

FIVE PILLARS OF GROWTH

1. Housing Affordability
2. Arts and Culture Expansion
3. Needs of The Immigrant Community
4. Transportation and Mobility
5. Education and Business Workforce Development



RECOMMENDATIONS – HOUSING/COM DEVELOPMENT

Develop a master plan for identifying the housing affordability needs of the broad spectrum of vulnerable populations, establish goals for addressing the needs, including sources of adequate sustained funding, and provide metrics for regularly evaluating progress toward achieving the goals.

2. Recognizing the increased demand for services to immigrant populations and the employment resource represented by these residents, the County should provide additional resources for immigrant service providers. This includes services that would assist immigrants in fully utilizing their talents in the community and obtaining recognition for foreign credentials and education.

3. Develop a new master plan for arts and culture to address the interests of a growing and diverse population County-wide including addressing the needs for adequate dedicated spaces for the performing arts and visual arts and guidelines for a formal public art program.

RECOMMENDATIONS – ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4. Conduct a masterplan for the Gateway Business Park in 2019 to expedite the approval and redevelopment of Gateway.
5. County Administration should budget, and the County Council should support, full annual funding for the Central Maryland Transit Development Plan adopted by the County in May 2018.
6. Develop two Resident focused websites to provide better access to the range of available services. One site should relate to entrepreneurship, business growth, workforce development, job placement, and community offerings. The second should include services useful to persons seeking resources to improve their lives, including employees.
7. Provide County-based businesses preferential weighting when awarding procurement contracts. Encourage private businesses to utilize local businesses where the talent is available to fulfill their needs. Reward larger businesses for utilizing local Howard County owned businesses as subcontractors.

RECOMMENDATIONS – EDUCATION/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

8. Reduce the barriers facing the underemployed population in Howard County and increase the coordination of workforce development resources. Implement community strategies for early childhood education to allow families access to affordable child care and children the opportunity to develop tools for future learning. Create closer, action-oriented relationships between regional employers, County educational institutions, and relevant parts of Howard County government.

Create programming focused on apprenticeships, internships, and other skills training that opens a path to increasing levels of employment opportunity. Incorporate both affordable health care and child care to make it possible for underemployed residents to stay employed without financial barriers.

Use public/private partnerships to increase the number of registered apprenticeships, internships, and skills training to open a path to increasing levels of employment opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS – EDUCATION/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONT'D

9. Intentionally include the seven soft skills required for long term success in the workplace in all skill development programs.

Lack of emotional intelligence and soft skills (also known as social emotional learning) are the primary reasons for employment termination. These skills include problem-based learning that teaches how to think for oneself and become better at finding the resources—information, tools, and materials—that are needed to increase confidence and to successfully solve problems.

Employers retain employees who are more skilled in this area and research indicates an improvement in business results. Soft skills training includes cultural proficiency so important to the diverse Howard County and the growing global market.

10. Implement activities and programming that acknowledges the prominence of the Encore (elder) population in Howard County. Such programming should include the support of youth and opportunities for retirees and job changers.

NEXT STEPS

- Submit to County Council and County Administration
- Schedule briefing for Council and Administration
- Publish on EOPTF website
- Inform orgs that are listed as interested parties
- Next steps for advocates